



Thanksgiving is Family History Day !

Thanksgiving 2004 will mark the first annual National Family History Day. Thanksgiving is a time when families often gather together to celebrate the traditional start of the holiday season. Family gatherings are a good time to talk with relatives about medical histories. "My Family Health Portrait" provides a way to record this important information. Remember to update the information on a routine basis—perhaps at Thanksgiving every year! Please share this information with your health care provider and entire family.

What is a Family Health History?

Family health history refers to health information about you and your close relatives. Family history is an important risk factor for chronic diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, stroke, some cancers, and other conditions that may run in families.

Family History and Your Health

US Surgeon General Launches Family Health History Campaign

United States Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona has launched a national initiative to encourage ALL Americans to learn more about their family health history. By tracing the illnesses of your parents, siblings, grandparents, and other blood relatives, the family health history can help predict chronic diseases for which you and your family may be at risk. Your doctor can help you plan your care to include screening and prevention measures based on the information you collect.



A new tool has been developed to help collect and organize your family health information, called "My Family Health Portrait". It can help identify common diseases that may run in your family. Copies are available in English and Spanish. The website also includes common questions and answers about the importance of family history. This tool can be downloaded and installed on your home computer from <http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory>. Printed copies are also available.

To order by phone call 1-888-8-PUEBLO and ask for "My Family Health Portrait". Specify #645M-English or #808M-Spanish. To order by mail, write to:

My Family Health Portrait
Pueblo, CO 81009

In addition to the Office of the U. S. Surgeon General, other Health & Human Services agencies involved in this initiative include the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

A Special Message from Michigan Surgeon General, Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom

Taking care of ourselves by eating well and being physically active is important for everyone. But for some of us, it's even more important. If you have a family history of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure, something as simple as brisk walking 30 minutes a day and following a healthy low fat diet could prevent you from ever getting the condition or delay your getting it.

Please, make it a point this holiday season to talk to one or more of your relatives about the health issues that run in your family then, talk to your doctor about these issues also. Don't leave your health to chance. Make health your choice! For ideas and help on moving more, eating better and not smoking, look for the new Michigan Steps Up website, coming soon to www.michiganstepsup.org



Suggested Reading



Your Genetic Destiny: Know Your Genes, Secure Your Health, Save Your Life by Aubrey Milunsky

Is It In Your Genes? The Influence of Genes on Common Disorders and Diseases That Affect You and Your Family by Philip R. Reilly

The Practical Guide to the Genetic Family History by Robin L. Bennett

For more reading ideas on family history and genetic conditions, visit
www.nsgc.org/resources/amazon_books.asp

What health conditions are important to collect and record?

Of the ten leading causes of death in Michigan, at least nine would be important to collect and record in your family health history. These include heart disease, cancer, stroke, lung disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, kidney disease, and serious infections like pneumonia. It is important for family members to share information about these and other health conditions with each other. The list of other possible conditions is very long, and includes high blood pressure, asthma/allergies, mental illness, seizures/epilepsy, blood disorders, osteoporosis, sudden unexplained deaths, birth defects, developmental delay, muscular disorders, early childhood deaths, stillbirths, two or more miscarriages, or known genetic syndromes. A record of habits such as smoking, heavy alcohol use, poor diet, and substance abuse can also be helpful.

Food for Thought

How important do you think knowledge of your family's health history is to your personal health?



at Thanksgiving

Have you ever actively collected health information from your relatives for purposes of developing a family health history?

According to a recent survey*, most people know that family history is important to health. While 96% of Americans believe knowing their family history is important, only **one-third** have tried to gather and write it down. Let's try to increase the number of Americans who have collected their family health history! Please start to gather your family health history this holiday season.

The State of Michigan will also have a chance to respond to these two questions. In 2005, a phone survey, called the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS), will ask these two questions of 4000 Michigan households. Stay tuned to find out how Michigan compares to the national survey results!

* 2004 HealthStyles Survey. Results reported in MMWR, 53(44);1044-1047/ November 12, 2004. Awareness of Family Health History as a Risk Factor for Disease — United States, 2004. www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5344a5.htm

Why is knowledge of your family health history important?

Family members share common habits, lifestyles, and environments. They also share traits that are passed through the generations, which is why family members often resemble one another. The family tree, and health history, reflect all of these shared influences. Lifestyle changes may be especially important to you if your family health history shows a higher risk for certain chronic diseases.



Let's go surfing!

www.hhs.gov/familyhistory

www.cdc.gov/genomics/public/famhist.htm

www.MIGeneticsConnection.org

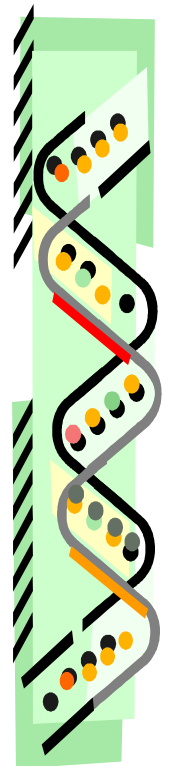
www.nsgc.org/consumer

www.geneticalliance.org, click genetic resources, then family history tools

www.generationalhealth.com

"Genes draw your road map, but you still chart your course"

—Jane E. Brody, New York Times,
Feb. 25, 2002



Michigan Department
of Community Health

MDCH

Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor
Janet Olszewski, Director